



**THE FLORIDA SENATE**  
**SENATOR DON GAETZ**  
*President*

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**Senators File Aggressive Legislative Package  
to Protect Florida's Children from Sexually Violent Predators**  
*Bipartisan Effort To Make Florida The Most Unfriendly State For Sex Offenders*

**Tallahassee**—Florida State Senators Rob Bradley (R-Fleming Island), Chair of the Senate Subcommittee on Civil and Criminal Justice Appropriations; Greg Evers (R-Baker), Chair of the Senate Committee on Criminal Justice; Denise Grimsley (R-Sebring), Chair of the Senate Subcommittee on Health and Human Services Appropriations; and Eleanor Sobel (D-Hollywood), Chair of the Senate Committee on Children, Families and Elder Affairs, today filed legislation to substantially strengthen Florida's protections against sexually violent predators.

"Protecting the most vulnerable among us is one of the most basic functions of government," said Senate President Don Gaetz (R-Niceville). "Together these bills will make Florida scorched earth for those who seek to harm our children."

The legislation filed today is the product of House and Senate hearings into what President Gaetz describes as "sexually violent predators slipping through the cracks of our criminal justice and civil commitment systems." Over the last several months, President Gaetz and House Speaker Will Weatherford joined members of the House and Senate for meetings with law enforcement, medical authorities, victims and advocates to gain their perspectives on how to build in more safeguards and protections for children.

**Senate Bill 526 by Senator Bradley** increases the length of sentences for certain adult-on-minor sexual offenses and also prohibits incentive gain-time for offenders convicted of certain sexual offenses. The legislation suspends (tolls) post-release supervision of offenders while in Department of Children and Families (DCF) custody as part of the civil commitment process and

requires the court to order community supervision (split sentences) after release from prison for certain sexual offenses.

“We need to keep violent sex offenders off our streets and away from our children,” said Senator Bradley. “By increasing the length of sentences for adult-on-minor sexual battery, lewd battery, and lewd molestation offenses, we will keep these predators locked up longer. This legislation also empowers probation officers to watch more sex offenders and to watch them for a longer period of time.”

**Senate Bill 528 by Senator Evers** requires registrants to report vehicle information, Internet identifiers, palm prints, passports, professional licenses, immigration status, volunteer work at a higher education institution, and other information. The legislation further strengthens current law by requiring registrants to provide information on vehicles they own and on vehicles they operate that are owned by any person who resides with the registrant.

“Members of a community deserve to know if a sex offender is residing within reach of their children,” said Senator Evers. “This bill strengthens the watchful eye of the sex offender registration process by requiring offenders to report more information.”

**Senate Bill 522 by Senator Grimsley** requires the sheriff to refer a prisoner who is serving a sentence in a county detention facility for civil commitment proceedings if the prisoner is a registered sexual offender or sexual predator and has previously committed a sexually violent offense. The legislation also adds a state attorney, law enforcement officer and victim’s advocate as advisory members to the multidisciplinary team that currently evaluates offenders who are considered for civil confinement. Additionally, the bill expands requirements for DCF release notifications to include the sheriff of the county in which the person intends to reside.

“By widening the net to capture potentially dangerous sex predators who are not currently referred to the Department of Children and Families for possible civil confinement, and improving the continuity of surveillance between state and county officials when a sexually violent predator is released from prison, we are establishing a process and giving law enforcement officials tools and information that is critical to keeping our communities safe,” said Senator Grimsley.

**Senate Bill 524 by Senator Sobel** would require that a person be defined as a sexually violent predator and be subject to civil confinement after a finding by two or more members of a multidisciplinary team, and requires higher education institutions to tell students about a sexual predator’s presence on campus.

“Senate Bill 524 retools the way the state identifies sexually violent predators to give a louder voice to victims and law enforcement and tightens the requirements for their re-entry into our communities,” said Senator Sobel.

Detailed bill summaries prepared by committee staff as well as the full text of the four bills listed above are available via the Senate’s website, [www.FLSenate.gov](http://www.FLSenate.gov).

“Even one predator slipping through the cracks, reoffending, and destroying the life of a child and his or her family is too many,” said Senate Majority Leader, Senator Lizbeth Benacquisto (R-Ft. Myers), chair of the Senate Republican Caucus. “I’m pleased we can come together as a united Senate to make Florida the most unfriendly place in America for sexually violent criminals.”

“There is clear evidence the laws we currently have on the books are not working well enough,” said Senate Minority Leader, Senator Chris Smith (D-Ft. Lauderdale), chair of the Senate Democrat Caucus. “I’m proud of this bi-partisan and comprehensive legislation that will better protect our children, and deliver some reassurances to parents that our communities and neighborhoods will be safer.”

President Gaetz continued, “I look forward to this issue being a centerpiece of our joint House and Senate agenda and to sending it to Governor Scott early in session.”

“Violent sexual predators will continue to offend as long as there is access and opportunity,” Gaetz said. “We can and we will do all within the power of the state government to prevent these horrific crimes. We can work to minimize risks, and when bad things do happen, we can make sure the offender is significantly less likely to recommit. As always, prevention will be most effective when engaged, aware and watchful family members, friends and neighbors take precautionary steps to protect the vulnerable members in our communities.”

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